

Pennsylvania Station
370 Seventh Avenue
(from West 31st to West 33rd
Streets between Seventh and
Eighth Avenues)
New York
New York County
New York

HABS No. NY-5471

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
801 19th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5471

PENNSYLVANIA STATION

Address: 370 Seventh Avenue; from West 31st to West 33rd Streets between Seventh and Eighth Avenues; New York, New York County, New York.

Present Use: Demolished. Madison Square Garden and a new station for the Pennsylvania Railroad were built on the site.

Statement of Significance: The construction of Pennsylvania Station was one part of a large building program undertaken in 1903 by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. Included in this program was the construction of tunnels under the North River, which enabled Pennsylvania Railroad trains to enter Manhattan directly from New Jersey for the first time.

Because the trains entered on tracks below ground level, the architects did not follow any of the more common architectural forms for a railway station and designed instead a rather low, colonnaded facade. Accordingly, The American Architect and Building News on May 26, 1906, commented:

In appearance it is a wide departure from the conventional railway station. One misses the turrets and towers and more than all the lofty arched train-shed, but as the principal function of this train shed is performed underneath the streets, the outward and visible signs of the ordinary railway station are naturally absent.

The rich sequence of spaces in the terminal culminated in the great concourse with its glass and steel roof. The design of the main waiting room was based on the Roman Baths of Caracalla. From a planning standpoint, the station was important for its separation of various forms of transportation on different levels and for the convenience of its many entrances and exits to the city.

Pennsylvania Station was built during the Golden Age of railroading, when its owners intended the terminal not only to serve the specific needs of the railroad but also to embellish the city as a monumental gateway. In September, 1910, The New York Architect predicted, unfortunately not accurately, that the architects and engineers had produced:

a work of which they may be justly proud, for not only will it be a lasting monument to their genius, perserverence and energy, but it will serve as an inspiration to the city of New York for the erection of other equally worthy public buildings and will be for all time to come a tangible object lesson for members of the architectural and engineering profession who may have the good fortune to be called upon to execute work of similar kind.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Pennsylvania Station was situated on Lot 1 of Block 781. Before the construction of the building, the property had been designated Lots 1 through 73 in Block 781 and Lots 1 through 81 in Block 782. The property was purchased for the terminal from the Stuyvesant Real Estate Company on December 19, 1901, and from the Netherlands Corporation of New York on January 28, 1903.

2. Date of erection:

1903	Construction of tunnels begun
May 1, 1904	Construction of terminal begun
September 12, 1906	North tube of tunnel opened
October 9, 1906	South tube of tunnel opened
September 8, 1910	Trains operated from terminal on regular schedule

3. Architects: McKim, Mead & White; Charles Follen McKim (1847-1909), William Rutherford Mead (1846-1928), and Stanford White (1853-1906).
4. Builder, suppliers: The following firms were involved in the construction of the building:

George A. Fuller Co., general contractor
Westinghouse, Church Kerr & Company and American Bridge Co. of New York, structural steel
Hydrex Felt & Engineering Co., foundation waterproofing
Norcross Brothers Co., granite
Batterson & Eisele, travertine stone and marble work
Deneville Hydraulic Composite Stone Company, composite stone, artificial Roman travertine stone
Mississippi Wire Glass Co., wire glass
National Ventilating Company, skylights
Guastavino System, concourse ceiling

Barrett-Mfg. Co., specification roofing
Arthur Greenfield, metal lathing
Hecla Iron Works and Tuttle & Bailey Mfg. Co., ornamental iron and bronze work
H.W. Miller, Inc., ornamental plaster
P. & F. Corbin, hardware
Cutler Mail Chute Company, mail chutes
Otis Elevator Co., elevators
Lincoln Mfg. Company, Betula walnut for office doors and trim
Manhattan Fireproof Door Co., Kalamein work
Self Winding Clock Co., clock system
Furnishings: John Wanamaker

5. Original plans: The engineering department of the Penn-Central Railroad in New York has structural drawings of the station. These are reproduced in American Society of Civil Engineers, Transactions, IXIX (October, 1910), 226-383.
6. Important old views:
 - a. Four volumes of progress photographs taken by L.H. Dreyer and others during construction of the terminal, 1907-10. Avery Library, Columbia University.
 - b. Lithograph of a bird's-eye view of Seventh Avenue and 32nd Street, looking toward Long Island, about 1906. Bella C. Landauer Collection, negative 36180A, Map and Print Room, New-York Historical Society.
 - c. Lithograph from a bird's-eye view drawing by Hughson Hawley taken from plan by McKim, Mead & White. Negative 34484C, Map and Print Room, New-York Historical Society.
 - d. Pencil and chalk drawing of excavation work for terminal by Emon Howe Bailey, 1906. Print Room, New York Public Library.
 - e. Photograph of a model of the station, showing the Seventh Avenue facade. Photo archive, Museum of the City of New York.
 - f. Interior photographs of concourse and waiting room, and an aerial view of the station. Photo archive, Museum of the City of New York.

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